

Guard assists state in wake of winter storms

By 1st Lt. Anthony Deiss
129th MPAD

SIOUX FALLS – The two blizzards that hit eastern South Dakota in late November and early December came with a vengeance and caused power outages to many communities throughout the state. Despite blowing snow and below freezing temperatures, power utility crews worked diligently to restore power to those communities without it.

Along side the power utility crews were members from the South Dakota Army National Guard’s 1742nd Transportation Company of Sioux Falls and Flandreau. Seven Soldiers were put on state active duty in support of Operation Blizzard to assist power utility crews and their local communities.

“We have Soldiers who have served their country in Iraq, spent a month in Louisiana assisting with the Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts, and are now helping fellow South Dakotans get through the effects of the blizzard – all in the last 12 months,” said 1st Lt. Kerry Engelmann, training officer for the 88th Troop Command. “I can’t think of a more challenging and rewarding part-time career.”

More than 9,000 power poles snapped under the tremendous weight of thick ice that formed on power lines during the storm. Unit members were called in to haul new poles for the electric cooperatives. Five Soldiers departed from the Sioux Falls armory on Dec. 2 for Le Mars, Iowa, to pick up power poles which were desperately



Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Don Matthews
Chief Master Sgt. Gene R. Gillen, South Dakota Air National Guard, updates the mission task board located in the SDNG Joint Operations Center.



Photos courtesy 1742nd Transportation Company
A power utility crew prepares to lift power poles delivered by an M915 Tractor and Trailer from the 1742nd Transportation Company of Sioux Falls during an ice storm that left many without power for several days. The unit delivered more than 100 utility poles to various locations throughout eastern South Dakota.



needed in the Parkston area. At the same time, two more Soldiers were hauling an Air National Guard snow blower from Armour to Sioux Falls.

One of the Soldiers commented, “This is why the Army National Guard is here, to assist the state when disasters of this magnitude happen.”

The Soldiers hauled load after load of power poles to communities that had been without power for almost two weeks. Electrical linemen were able to continue to set poles and run lines because they didn’t have to worry about running out of poles.

“One attribute that constantly amazes me is (the Soldiers’) dedication to the mission,” said Engelmann. “I’ve had generator mechanics from our maintenance company and truck drivers from our transportation companies out in zero degree weather, working well into the night to accomplish the mission.”

“Our Citizen-Soldiers have once again risen to the occasion,” added Engelmann.

The 1742nd hauled more than 100 utility poles to various locations and continued that mission as the power companies requested it. The Guard also supported electric cooperatives with the removal of damaged power poles and hauled fuel to power-crew utility vehicles.

More than 300 Soldiers and Airmen from the SDNG supported the state in the blizzard recovery response.

“No one ever looks forward to a crisis or disaster,” said Chief Master Sgt. Gene Gillen, military support specialist. “But, it is reassuring to know that our Soldiers and Airmen are trained, ready and most of all willing to

assist whenever and wherever they are called.”

When the first storm hit South Dakota, the SDNG began running a 24-hour, fully operational Joint Operations Center (JOC) at Camp Rapid, in Rapid City, to support equipment and personnel requests from the state emergency operations center (EOC) in Pierre.

The requests included helicopter support to Rural Electric Association, FEMA and media representatives; supplying generators, cots, beds, meals ready to eat (MREs) and sleeping bags, sheltering community members

in armories, debris clean-up, vehicle recovery assistance, and physical checks on residents as part of the state’s Operation Door-to-Door.

“The good news is that we have the people and equipment needed to support the missions for our fellow South Dakotans,” said Col. Scott Jacobson, director of operations.

“Even better, we have been able to provide the support without any accidents or injuries to our Guard members participating in the missions,” says Jacobson. He attributed this to effective leadership, training and emergency preparedness.

Two South Dakota Guard Soldiers killed, Three more injured in IED attack



Sgt. 1st Class Richard Schild (left) and Staff Sgt. Daniel Cuka (right) both from Yankton's Charlie Battery, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery were killed in action when two separate improvised explosive devices detonated near their HUMVEES.

By SDNG PAO

RAPID CITY – The South Dakota Army National Guard announced the death of two Soldiers from Yankton's Charlie Battery, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery that is currently in Iraq supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. Sgt. 1st Class Richard Schild, 40, of Tabor, and Staff Sgt. Daniel M. Cuka, 27, of Yankton were killed on Dec. 4 in Baghdad. Both were killed when two separate improvised explosive devices detonated near their HUMVEEs (HMMWV) while en-route

to an Iraqi police station. Three other Soldiers with the battery were also injured during the incident. Schild was the 1st Platoon Sergeant and Cuka was a team leader for Charlie Battery. The battery has been assigned the mission to train and evaluate the Iraqi Police Force in one of the city's police districts. "Our hearts go out to all of the Soldiers' families that were involved in this incident," stated Lt. Col. Marshal Michels, commander of the 1st Battalion, 147th FA. "This is a tragic

loss for South Dakota, Richard and Dan were outstanding Soldiers and leaders and they will be truly missed." Charlie Battery was mobilized in July of 2005 and deployed to the Middle East in October 2005. A total of five SDARNG Soldiers have died since Operation Iraqi Freedom began. The three other Soldiers are Sgt. Dennis Morgan, 22, of Valentine, Neb., Staff Sgt. Cory Brooks, 32, of Philip, S.D. and Chief Warrant Officer Paul Pillen, 28, of Keystone, S.D.

Soldier dies in Kuwait



Chief Warrant Officer Paul Pillen died of a non-combat related cause.

By SDNG PAO

RAPID CITY – The South Dakota Army National Guard announced the death of a Soldier supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. Chief Warrant Officer Paul Jared Pillen, 28 of Keystone, S.D., died on Oct. 17, 2005 in Salwa, Kuwait of a non-combat related cause. Pillen was a pilot assigned to Detachment 3, Company A, 249th Aviation in Rapid City. Detachment 3, Company A, 249th Aviation was mobilized on Dec. 1, 2004 and returned home Jan 4.

the Coyote

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129th MOBILE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT

CAB award presented posthumously

By SDNG PAO

RAPID CITY – The Army's new Combat Action Badge was presented to Cassie Morgan of Rapid City by Maj. Gen. Michael Gorman, the adjutant general, on Jan. 6. Cassie Morgan is the widow of SDNG Soldier Sgt. Dennis Morgan. Sgt. Dennis Morgan, 22, of Valentine, Neb., died April 16, 2004, when an improvised explosive device exploded near his M-113 armored personnel carrier. Morgan was manning a squad automatic weapon while providing security during route clearing operations in Iraq. "Dennis would have been very proud to wear this award," said Cassie. Morgan was assigned to Detachment 1, Company A, 153rd Engineer Battalion from Winner, S.D. "Many Soldiers in different units up until now have not qualified for any type of badge," said State Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Birnbaum. "The Army's new Combat Action Badge will recognize many South Dakota Soldiers that have seen combat." South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers, who engaged with or were engaged by the enemy in battle, are eligible to receive the Army's new CAB. "It is extremely important that we recognize the sacrifice our Soldiers and



State Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Birnbaum (left) observes Maj. Gen. Michael Gorman, adjutant general, SDNG (right) as he presents Cassie Morgan (center) the Combat Action Badge earned by her late husband Sgt. Dennis Morgan. families have made," said Maj. Gen. Gorman. "This award is one way to honor them." Eligibility requirements were established for the new award, as well as changes to the Combat Infantry Badge and Combat Medic Badge, in a letter published June 3, 2005 by the Department of the Army. This policy affects individuals who deployed and served in a combat zone or imminent danger area since Sept. 18, 2001. The CAB may be awarded to any Soldier performing duties in an area where hostile fire pay or imminent danger pay is authorized. A Soldier's branch or military occupational specialty does not limit his or her eligibility for the award. Assignment to a Combat Arms unit or a unit organized to conduct close or offensive combat operations, or performing offensive combat operations is not required to qualify for the CAB; however a Soldier must not be assigned or attached to a unit that would qualify the Soldier for the CIB or CMB. For the purpose of awarding the CAB, attacks by mortars, rockets, rocket-propelled grenades, improvised explosive devices and suicide bombers, or other projectiles qualify for the CAB.

New Guard incentive recruiting program empowers Soldiers to bring in Soldiers

By SDNG PAO

RAPID CITY – A new incentive program could have National Guard Soldiers earning up to \$2,000 for each potential Soldier they recruit into the South Dakota Army National Guard.

Maj. Gen. Michael Gorman, adjutant general, announced Dec. 21, that South Dakota Army National Guard is now authorized to go forward with a new Guard recruiting initiative designed to empower Soldiers with training and incentives to recruit potential Soldiers.

This new initiative, known as the Guard Recruiting Assistant Program (G-RAP), is returning to a “grassroots” or community-based recruiting concept where current Soldiers build the future of their National Guard with quality citizens from their communities to serve together in the Army National Guard.

“This program gives our Soldiers the freedom to participate in their Guard’s destiny,” said Gorman. “Soldiers engaged in their communities can fill the ranks with those friends, neighbors, family members, and co-workers within their sphere of influence.”

Soldiers that wish to participate in this program work closely with their

unit’s recruiting and retention non-commissioned officer (RRNCO) to receive the on-line training certifying them as a recruitment assistant (RA).

The contractor Docupak, not the ARNG, conducts this certification and hiring process. Only traditional or M-Day non-mobilized Soldiers are eligible to become an RA, as the program is not yet open to active guard and reserve or full- and part-time technicians. The program is scheduled to be open to members of the Air National Guard and Army Reserve sometime in early 2006.

Once the RA training is accomplished, the incentives are immediate. The RA receives a “new hire kit,” which contains a number of items from a t-shirt and polo shirt to brochures, business cards, and pamphlets.

Another important item in the kit is the payment cash card. The RA can expect \$2,000 per Soldier who is successfully brought into the SDARNG. The first \$1,000 is provided to the RA once a potential Soldier enlists in the Guard and a second \$1,000 is provided once the new recruit reports for his or her initial entry training (IET). RAs are not limited to the number of Soldiers they bring into the SDARNG.

“Soldiers know what it means to

serve,” continued Gorman. “Now they have the tools to bring in others whom they wish to share this tradition of service we have here in South Dakota.”

These “new hire kit” items are provided to professionally equip the RA for success in bringing in potential Soldiers to the Guard. The RA may not conduct G-RAP recruiting in uniform or while the Soldier is in any type of drill status. Performance and actions as a RA are independent from the Soldier’s role as a member of the Guard, which is another purpose for such a robust “new hire kit” from the Docupak contractor.

One of the main differences of the G-RAP from other recruiting programs is how sponsorship is an integral part of this new initiative process. The RA not only recruits, but is also responsible for a continued sponsorship once the potential Soldier is brought into the program. The RA maintains contact with the new recruit all the way through reporting to and completion of basic and advanced individual training.

“Individual sponsorship creates a one-on-one bond that promotes a mentoring relationship,” says State Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Birnbaum. “We feel that this approach will be more successful because the sponsoring Soldier has vested interest

in seeing the new recruit succeed. Likewise, the new Soldier feels that someone is directly looking out for their well-being.”

Maj. John Weber, SDARNG recruiting and retention commander, is especially excited about the new program.

“Currently, the National Guard Bureau (NGB) states 80 percent of our recruiters’ time is spent prospecting new leads and only 20 percent is spent processing enlistments,” said Weber. “G-RAP will give us potentially over 3,100 Soldiers to prospect potential Soldiers throughout South Dakota.”

The SDARNG was not originally scheduled to conduct the program until late Jan or Feb of 2006. However, the state’s recruiting command requested that NGB designate South Dakota as a test-state for the program along with approximately 17 other states.

“South Dakota has always been a strong National Guard state and one of the leaders in the country in all recruiting and retention categories,” continued Weber. “Giving a strong state the opportunity to test the program will give NGB a good sense of the type of success we can expect across the country.”

Charlie Battery celebrates Thanksgiving in Baghdad

By 1st Lt. Anthony Deiss
129th MPAD

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Few can possibly know or appreciate the meaning of Thanksgiving more than the American Soldier; serving in a far off place away from family, friends and the many amenities of life; especially during the holidays.

For the Soldiers of Charlie Battery, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery of Yankton, they celebrated their first Thanksgiving in Iraq.

“We ate Thanksgiving dinner in our chow hall; it was all set up.” said Battery Commander Capt. Phillip Stiles. “Some of the best service they have here is the chow hall, it’s immaculate. I don’t think there is anything that could have topped the Thanksgiving meal that the dining hall served.”

“We all celebrated Thanksgiving in our own special way,” continued Stiles. “We gave the guys some time off so they could enjoy their Thanksgiving Holiday. They had a little bit of time to get in contact with their family, we made sure everybody got a chance to get on a computer and do some emailing, and made sure everybody had a chance to use the phone if they wanted to.”

The time off for the South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers was short. With a mission to train the Iraqi Police Force for the National Election; time was of the essence.

“For most of the holiday we trained,” said Stiles. “You can’t stop over here; you can’t stop for even a day. We had the elections coming up; it was fast approaching and we didn’t have a lot of time.”

Operating in Baghdad and the surrounding area for more than a month, the 151 Soldiers of Charlie Battery are assigned to train and evaluate the Iraqi Police Force in one of the city’s police districts.

“Our mission is to partner with the Iraqi Police and assist them in planning and training,” said Stiles. “We conduct some operations with the police, but our primary mission is to train and assess the Iraqi Police Force. They are very good guys to work with and they are very appreciative of the work we are doing for them.”

While training the new Iraqi Police Force, the unit is finding many challenges in their mission, and though the success may not be seen instantly, the rewards are coming.

“They are young in their profession and they are still learning, but they do have some experienced officers,” said Stiles. “It is difficult at times because of the language barriers, but at the end of the day it is very rewarding, especially with some of these individuals who really understand they are here to serve the citizens of Baghdad.”

“The training that we are doing with the police is a gradual progression,” continued the battery commander. “It is happening, but you can’t see it on a day-by-day basis – its happening over time.”

The Soldiers are seeing instant results amongst the Iraqi children. And on a day of thanksgiving, in a place where people have few things to be thankful for, it’s the smallest things that bring joy to these Soldiers and the children they interact with.

“When you stop by the side of a road in an extremely poor neighborhood and give the Iraqi children some candy, some pencils and paper, that is instant gratification,” said Stiles. “One of the things the Soldiers enjoy most is seeing and interacting with the Iraqi children. As the Soldiers move from one police station to another, everybody is in an area where they notice that the children don’t have much. We have things carried over from the last unit here, and we will stop and hand out pencils, paper and anything we can for the children.”

“The guys just love that. The kids love it. They are very thankful in receiving it and the guys love doing it for them,” added Stiles. “There are a lot of kids over here that don’t have anything and you’d be amazed what a pencil can do for a poor Iraqi child.”



Photo courtesy 147th FA

Capt. Phillip Stiles Charlie Battery, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery from Yankton stands in front of the setting sun in Iraq.

249th aviators return home to flying celebration

By **Spc. Laurie Quick**
129th MPAD

FORT BLISS, Texas – For members of Detachment 3, Company A, 249th Aviation, their return home after serving for a year in Iraq was a welcomed one.

Six members returned in January but not without loss. Pilot Chief Warrant Officer Paul Jared Pillen, 28, of Keystone, S.D., died of a non-combat related cause Oct. 17 in Salwa, Kuwait. But for the remainder of the unit, home is a welcome sight.

“It feels great to be home,” said Staff Sgt. Tyson Morgan, while in Fort Bliss, Texas finishing his out-processing. “It feels really good... mission accomplished.”

Five members of the unit arrived back in the United States Jan. 5 at Fort Bliss after having served for a year in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The 249th was greeted by unit member Sgt. Christopher Cox of Pierre, who was wounded in action last August, but was able to meet his fellow Soldiers at Fort Bliss.

Sgt. Cox remained in Fort Bliss to undergo surgery for the injuries he received by enemy fire last summer. SDNG leaders hope to reunite Cox with the detachment for the upcoming homecoming ceremony and publicly recognize his sacrifice with the presentation of the Purple Heart.

Another unit member Chief

Warrant Officer Steve O’berg remained in Iraq completing administrative duties for the unit, and returned home Jan. 20.

Four pilots and four flight engineers make up the detachment of the 36-Soldier company. Other detachments in the company come from Washington, Oregon, and Oklahoma.

Chief Warrant Officer Steve O’Berg is the company standardization instructor pilot, and acting commander for Det. 3. He and his flight crews flew hundreds of missions to every operational airfield in Iraq since January 2005. They flew C-23 cargo planes, more commonly referred to as Sherpas, which can hold up to 14 combat-equipped Soldiers, or 3,500 pounds of cargo.

“Our daily missions included flying everything from blood, to aircraft engines and parts, truck parts, ammunition, troops and prisoners, and just about anything else it takes to run a war and will fit in our airplanes,” O’Berg said.

The group was based at Logistical Supply Area Anaconda operating above and beyond the expected capabilities of a small unit with only three aircraft, flying more than double the hours of stateside units. O’Berg reflected on life during the deployment.

“It really is pretty much like ‘Groundhog Day’ every day here,” he said referring to the movie starring Bill Murray. “We get up early, do a mission from one up to five of the 15 airports



Photo by 1st Lt. Anthony Deiss

Staff Sgt. Tyson Morgan (right) of Detachment 3, Company A, 249th Aviation is greeted and welcomed home by Lt. Col. Kit Cline, 881st Troop Command, SDARNG, as the two share a laugh when the unit returned Jan. 5 to Fort Bliss, Texas.

we service, come home, post flight, plan the next day’s flight, go to the gym, eat diner, and go to bed.”

The operations tempo, combined with the heat and low-level flights, took its toll on the crewmembers. Most chose to spend their four-day pass on post, relaxing, instead of flying to Qatar.

Upon his return from R&R in August, Chief O’Berg reported, “...the reception of Soldiers in uniform by the general public, the airlines, friends and family is humbling to say the least.

As always, it is an honor to be serving with, and for great people.”

Looking back on his tour of duty, Morgan, a flight engineer, said his unit’s mission was critical.

“We had an important combat mission, not only to deliver troops and cargo, but to keep as many convoys off the road as possible,” he said.

Now that he is home, Morgan said he is looking forward to eating real food, fishing, having a normal family life and going for a ride on his dirt bike.

Detachment 3, Company F, 238th Aviation is home



Photo by Roger Anderson

State Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Birnbaum welcomes back Sgt. 1st Class Phil Lackner during the Detachment 3, Company F, 238th Aviation Intermediate Maintenance welcome home ceremony.

By **SDNG PAO**

RAPID CITY – Members of Detachment 3, Company F, 238th Aviation Intermediate Maintenance received a hearty welcome back to South Dakota Nov. 9, and were honored for their recent tour of duty in Iraq.

The welcome home ceremony, held at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Rapid City, also recognized the Soldiers’ families and employers for their sacrifice and support during the deployment.

In his address to the Soldiers, Maj. Gen. Michael Gorman, adjutant general, noted that each of the Soldiers sacrificed a part of their lives to serve their country.

“All of these Soldiers missed a year of being with their families,” he said. “They missed their children’s ballgames, some missed graduations and birthdays.”

Stationed at Camp Anaconda, the 238th AVIM provided intermediate level maintenance for Army helicopters supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom III.

Gorman said the unit was recognized as the best in the battalion and was recognized theater wide for the quality of work performed.

During the nine months spent in Iraq, the 10-member unit performed 20 UH-60 and CH-47 phases, completed more than 5,000 work orders and processed more than 25,000 parts requests.

216th conducts extraction training

Members of the 216th Engineer Detachment Fire Fighting Team of Sturgis, conducted extraction training on Nov. 5. The Sturgis Volunteer Fire Department led the extraction training. Jim’s Auto Salvage donated the cars that were demolished. The training included how to safely remove glass, doors, and roofs while patients are still inside the vehicle. The members of the 216th would like to extend a very big thank you to both Jim’s Auto Salvage, and the Sturgis Volunteer Fire Department. Photos by Pfc. Anthony Kayl



Soldiers march to honor veterans

Staff Sgt. Joe Cross (left) from Wamble and Sgt. Billy Gourd from Kyle, both with the 155th Engineer Detachment, marched along the Mickelson Trail to during The Second Annual Black Hills Veterans March on Sept. 26. Soldiers and veterans from the Army and Air National Guard and civilians from around the community hiked 26 miles of the Mickelson Trail. About 50 participants started in Rochford and ended in Deadwood.

Photo by Roger Anderson



727th Trans Company raises funds for veterans transportation

By MaryAnn Foster

BROOKINGS – The “Veterans for Veterans” Poker Run was held Sept. 3, 2005, beginning at the Brookings Armory. The event, organized by members of the 727th Transportation Company in Watertown, Brookings, and Elk Point, raised \$1,730 for the Disabled American Veterans transportation fund.

The idea started last spring at a recruiting/retention meeting, when ideas were discussed to promote the National Guard in communities, organizers said. A poker run was suggested as many Guard personnel ride bikes and thought it would be a fun way to get together, ride, have fun, and raise money for a worthy cause.

From the Brookings Armory, the poker run route went on to the Flandreau Veterans Center, the Madison VFW, the Arlington American Legion, the Triple B in Badger, and ended up at Ratski’s at Lake Poinsett.



There were 142 poker hands, 106 motorcycles, two cars, and one humvee chase vehicle with a trailer. The first place winner was Jack Kasdorf of Estelline, S.D. Many door prizes were donated for the event, and the winner received first pick of the door prizes. Participants could purchase tickets and the door prizes were given away through drawings.

Of the money raised, \$1,420 came from the poker hands, and an additional \$310 came from door prize tickets. 1st Sgt. Bob Foster and his wife MaryAnn were the main organizers of the event.

“I was hoping for 50 bikes, and we ended up with over 100. We had a great first year,” Foster said.

The 727th Transportation Company plans on making the “Veterans for Veterans” Poker Run an annual event.

More than 100 motorcycles showed up for a the first “Veterans for Veterans” Poker Run organized by members of the 727th Transportation Company based out of Watertown, Brookings, and Elk Point.

Photo courtesy 727th Transportation Company

STARBASE graduates 100th class

By SDNG PAO

RAPID CITY – The South Dakota National Guard is proud to announce the graduation of the 100th class to enroll in its STARBASE program.

STARBASE, which stands for Science and Technology Academies Reinforcing Basic Aviation and Space Exploration, began in Rapid City on Sept. 11, 2002, with classes being held at Camp Rapid. Funded through the Department of Defense, the program focuses on science, math, technology and the development of goal setting skills that nurture strong self-esteem and positive attitudes using aerospace education.

The students also have the opportunity to tour airplanes, helicopters, fly in flight simulators, use computers to get information from satellites in space, and perform exciting experiments.

With the Nov. 16 class of 24 graduates, STARBASE will have provided the five-day program (25 hours of instruction) to 2,504 students in the past three years. The program also provided 311 students with either a one or three-day - Best of STARBASE program.

“The STARBASE program is a wonderful way to help keep kids on the right track by bringing the practical application of the sciences and the military to our students,” said Senator Johnson on a Jan. 9 brief on the program at Camp Rapid.



Photo by 1st Lt. Anthony Deiss

Children from Knollwood Elementary School fire rockets on the Camp Rapid parade field as the Starbase program celebrates its 100th graduating class.

842nd Engineers receive meritorious unit citation

By Sgt. Mark Watson
129th MPAD

BELLE FOURCHE – Soldiers of the 842nd Engineer Unit received the Meritorious Unit Commendation on Dec. 3 in Belle Fourche for the unit’s exceptional duty in Iraq.

The SDNG unit received the citation as it was attached to the 1st Armored Division from May 26 to Dec. 18 of 2003. The Germany-based division nominated the 842nd, as well as all of its attached engineer units, for the prestigious award for the outstanding combat support provided to the division’s maneuver units.

“This means a great deal,” said Staff Sgt. Marcus Stacey, a section sergeant for the unit. “It signifies all the hard work the entire unit did overseas.”

During their 14 months in the war-zone, Soldiers with the unit performed hundreds of missions reconstructing roads, creating helicopter landing areas and creating more than 1,000 acres of livable ground for Soldiers.

During the year, the Soldiers

battled extreme heat and humidity and lived with the threat of attack from an aggressive insurgency causing them to become a close-knit family.

“The most rewarding memory of the deployment is the close ties we made with the 150 people who went with us,” Stacey said. “They are all like brothers and sisters now.”

“I am extremely proud of what the unit has accomplished,” said Maj. Gen. Michael Gorman at the ceremony. “But units really don’t accomplish anything. It’s the Soldiers in the unit who make it all happen.”

Gorman said the Soldiers of the unit have accomplished a lot more than just their time in Iraq.

“The 842nd isn’t just about what happened in the war,” Gorman said. “Over the years the 842nd has made significant contributions to the state mission, the part where we all help out our neighbors in time of emergency and disaster. They had Soldiers helping out across the state in reaction to the recent blizzard. Not too long ago, South Dakota sent a 200 plus contingent of Soldiers down to Louisiana to help in the recovery operations from Hurricane Katrina,



Photo by Sgt. Mark Watson

Maj. Gen. Michael Gorman, adjutant general South Dakota National Guard, congratulates Spc. Brian Batien on receiving the Meritorious Unit Citation Award for his service as part of the 842nd Engineer Company during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

and I know there were 842nd Soldiers involved in that.”

He added that in every crisis since the unit was created 1968, the 842nd had helped out, and their exemplary service carried over to Iraq where the Soldiers distinguished themselves from units with similar missions.

“I am very honored to be here to preside over the ceremony,” Gorman said. “I know that you Soldiers of the 842nd are the best of the best and I am darned proud to say that I was one of you.”

Task Force Coyote helps in community recovery

Editors Note: The following story was written while Task Force Coyote was operating in Louisianan. Since the stories original release, the Task Force has since returned home.

By 1st Lt. Michael Fields
Task Force Coyote

PLAQUEMINES PARISH, La. – The South Dakota National Guard’s Task Force Coyote has been assisting the people of Port Sulphur, located south of New Orleans.

Members of Task Force Coyote were sent to the area to help residents rebuild. With the town and parish drying out from the floods, unit members leveled areas for Federal Emergency Management Agency trailer sites.

“There are still many challenges that lie ahead as the people of Louisiana rebuild,” said Brig. Gen. Hunt Downer, assistant adjutant general of the Louisiana National Guard. “The task

at hand is to erect FEMA trailers so local citizens have a home and get businesses back in operation.”

While assisting in relief operations, the Task Force was visited by U.S. Congresswoman Stephanie Herseth (D) from South Dakota, along with the U.S. House Agriculture Committee Delegation. The Delegation flew into the New Orleans area to survey the damage caused by Hurricane Katrina and visit local grain operations along the Mississippi River to assess shipping port damage.

Spc. Christina Preble of the 727th Transportation Company in Watertown, talked with the members of Congress and explained some of the missions that the South Dakota National Guard has accomplished.

This includes recovering displaced boats, towing equipment, clearing road ways, removing damaged trees, cleaning up gas stations, churches, and schools, providing medical support to civilians and levee repair. Driveways have also been cleared so citizens can get their own gear into their property to begin cleaning up.

South Dakota Soldiers and Airmen also worked side-by-side with Idaho National Guardsmen helping clear out the town’s primary grocery store, Fremins Foodliner. The store has been in business since 1986 and employs 35 residents, to include seven family members. The entire store, was covered by water for four to five days said Daniel Fremin, the store co-owner.



Photo by Pfc. Nikki Kueter

Members of Task Force Coyote of the South Dakota Army National Guard help load television screens into a school bus to be transported to schools in the northern part of Plaquemines Parish.

The store was completely stocked and the Guard was tasked to clear out the building and haul away damaged goods and equipment, giving Fremin a chance to restart his business.

Currently, Fremin and his family are living in Belle Chasse with relatives until his business is up and running again. Fremin realizes he will have to start out slow because many of the locals have moved. Fremin doesn’t plan on leaving the area though.

“I am too young to retire and it is the only property I own,” said Fremin. “This is the only thing I am good at and I have a family that lives here.”

Unit members also helped teachers and administrators in the parish pick up the pieces of schools that were damaged by the storm.

The service members aided in the efforts to retrieve what items could be salvaged from the schools in the southern parts of the parish and move them to schools less affected in the northern parts.

Members from Task Force Coyote helped carry out desks and computers from second story classrooms and loaded them onto trucks to haul them north.

Some of the schools will take years to rebuild before they will be open to students again. Until then, students are free to open-enroll at any of the schools in the parish. Teachers are also being offered jobs in northern schools to replace faculty members that aren’t returning to the area.

1st Lt. Evert Olesen said his troops were willing to assist the schools in anyway they could.

“Everyone is just happy to get to help out,” said Olesen.



Photo by 1st Lt. Michael Fields

Sgt. Mark Mahoney with the 665th Maintenance Company of Mitchell, unhooks a chain from a refrigeration unit after removing the unit from Fremin’s Foodmart.

FA brigade will mob for deployment

By SDNG PAO

SIOUX FALLS – Soldiers from the 147th Field Artillery Brigade have received a mobilization order for deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. The Sioux Falls unit will be comprised of 16 South Dakota National Guard Soldiers and is expected to report to a designated mobilization station in early March.

The South Dakota Army National Guard unit is tentatively scheduled to report to Camp Shelby, Miss., to begin the deployment process. At the mobilization station, the unit is expected to spend several months training before it deploys in support of the 41st Brigade Combat Team (BCT), which has been assigned the mission to train the Afghanistan National Army (ANA).

“This will be our Guard’s second deployment to Afghanistan,” said Gorman “Its evident we are still engaged in the Global War on Terror.”

The 16 members will make up an Embedded Training Team (ETT) in support of the 41st BCT mission. The team will include a commander and sergeant major as well as a staff that manages operations and plans, logistics, personnel, intelligence and communications. The 147th Soldiers will work directly with the Afghanistan Soldiers as mentors and trainers.

This new assignment is not the traditional mission of the 147th Field Artillery Brigade. The unit’s primary wartime mission is to provide command and control of up to five field artillery battalions. The mission of these battalions is to provide fire support to other combat units in the form of artillery cannon and rocket fire. However, the skills needed to command and control artillery battalions are the same skills needed to train and mentor foreign military leaders. The ETT is designed to equip the ANA with the combat multiplier of leadership.

“This is a great opportunity for our Soldiers to participate in such a historic event,” said State Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Birnbaum. “By training the Afghanistan military leadership, our South Dakota Guard is contributing to the success of another country’s stability and future.”

Once trained as an ETT, Soldiers of the 147th are tentatively scheduled to depart in the summer of 2006 for Afghanistan for a one-year boots-on-ground deployment.

“Since 9-11, South Dakota Soldiers and Airmen have stood up when called to serve,” said Maj. Gen. Michael Gorman, adjutant general. “I am as proud and as confident in these Soldiers as I am in the men and women from South Dakota that have gone before to serve their nation.”

Since the terrorist attacks on America in 2001, the South Dakota Army National Guard has mobilized more than 2,700 Soldiers from more than 30 different units to support the Global War on Terrorism both at home and abroad. During the peak of deployments, South Dakota had more than 1,500 Soldiers in Iraq at one time.

More than two thirds of the South Dakota Air National Guard’s 1,000 members have actively supported the Global War on Terrorism at home or abroad.

Currently, more than 150 Soldiers remain on duty in Iraq and nearly 3,500 National Guard men and women are still serving in a non-active duty status in South Dakota and continue to provide support for state and national emergencies and homeland defense.

129th MPAD to support OIF/OEF

By SDNG PAO

RAPID CITY – Soldiers from the 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment have received a mobilization order for deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The South Dakota Army National Guard unit will mobilize in mid-April and will report to Fort McCoy, Wis., to begin the deployment process. The unit will spend several months training at McCoy before they deploy in support of U.S. Central Command. The unit’s mission will be to conduct public affairs operations for CENTCOM and any of its 26 areas of responsibility throughout the world, which includes the Iraq and Afghanistan theaters of operation.

“I’m excited about this mission for the 129th,” said 1st Lt. Anthony Deiss, 129th operations officer. “It’s a great opportunity to be able to serve in a multitude of operations that are being conducted throughout the world.”

The 129th MPAD is a split unit with the headquarters element, and half the unit’s members training in Rapid City, and a detachment which trains in Bismarck, N.D. The unit will link-up and train together once they report to Fort McCoy.

Deployments are nothing new for this unit. The unit came together and deployed to Fort Riley, Kan., in 2003 in support of Operation Noble Eagle for four months.

The headquarters element of the 129th MPAD just recently returned in September from their two-week annual training held in the hurricane disaster area of New Orleans. While covering the hurricane relief effort, the unit was able to train on the same mission it will conduct while supporting CENTCOM.

“Covering the Hurricane Katrina relief operations in Louisiana was a great opportunity that has helped us to prepare for this deployment,” said Deiss. “It sharpened our skills as broadcast and print journalists, it gave us a chance to facilitate and escort national and international news media organizations and we worked with different branches of the military. All of which will be of benefit while we operate for CENTCOM.”

COMMANDERS COMMENTS

The Adjutant General

Each and every day, I count my blessings for being a member of such a great team as the South Dakota National Guard. I know that we have our “ups and downs” but you have to admit most days are pretty special. It starts with the great Soldiers and Airmen that we serve with and continues with the tremendous support we receive from our state and its great citizens.

The future of our National Guard is not necessarily a certainty. There are always those in Washington who would like to diminish our Federal role and would like to reduce our overall size across the nation. We need to constantly be aware of these outside forces and be ready to let our supporters express their disapproval of changes that hurt the Guard.

The one thing we all can do to ensure we are not reduced, is to make sure our ranks are filled with great South Dakotans. If we fail in this, our detractors are able to cut us back and say we were unable to fill our ranks. All members of our TEAM can contribute to our success in this area. The future of the South Dakota National Guard is in our hands; mine and yours. The recent implementation of the Guard – Recruiting Assistance Program (G-RAP) allows our Soldiers the capability to shape the future of the Guard by encouraging their friends and neighbors to become a member of our great team.

You have all done an outstanding job of meeting our commitment to the Global War on Terrorism and our State mission. In fact, this past year, you performed magnificently overseas and both in South Dakota and on the Gulf Coast with hurricane Katrina support. You are to be commended for this great effort. I would now ask that you take on our strength fight with the same intensity that you have given to the other missions that you have successfully completed.

It's YOUR National Guard! Let's all work together to fill our ranks!

Michael A. Gorman
MG, SDARNG
Adjutant General



State Command Sergeant Major

I am writing this article for the last time as your State Command Sgt. Maj. I have served in this capacity for the last five years. I would like to reflect on some of the things that have happened in the South Dakota National Guard during this time.

I remember being selected for this position by Maj. Gen. Phillip Killey and starting work in Feb. 1, 2001. As you all know on 11 Sept., America was attacked. Shortly after this we started mobilizing Soldiers in the South Dakota Guard for service in Iraq and Afghanistan and duty state side. These were extremely busy times as we mobilized more Soldiers from the South Dakota Guard than anytime since World War II.

My job as your top enlisted leader was to represent the South Dakota Army National Guard, take care of Soldiers and see that you were ready and trained to go to war. I visited many of you at mob stations across the country to observe training. I had the opportunity to visit some of you in Bosnia, Kosovo, Nicaragua and Iraq. I am proud of all of you for the service you have given to the SDNG and the country. I thank you and your families for the sacrifices you have made.

I remember South Dakotas’ first death and wounded in the war and those that were to come. That was the hardest part of this job. I will not forget the service and sacrifice they gave to their country.

I also want to thank Maj. Gen. Gorman for keeping me on and Donna Abrams for the great support she gave me in the office over the years.

One person that really deserves credit for helping and supporting me is my wife Sarah. She tolerated me being gone over 200 days a year representing our Soldiers. She packed and unpacked suitcase after suitcase for my trips. She has been a great supporter of me and the Guards over the years.

The Guards has given Sarah & I many opportunities we would otherwise not have had, and I hope some of you will have some of the same opportunities we have had. I could cover pages of my memories over the last five years as your State Command Sgt. Maj. I want to tell you how proud I have been to have represented all of you. I saw Soldiers dedicated to the Guard and willing to give all for their country if need be. Some of you may think that there is no place to go in the South Dakota Guard but stay focused, do the best that you can and rising to the top can be done. Thanks again for supporting me in representing you.

Michael L. Birnbaum
CSM, SDARNG
State Command Sergeant Major



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Counterdrug Program hosts law enforcement training and receives visit from South Dakota Senator Johnson



LEFT: State and local law enforcement officers board a South Dakota Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk during warrant execution training hosted by the South Dakota National Guard Counterdrug Program. The 1085th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) provided the airlift support to the exercise at Fort Meade, Sturgis, S.D.
Photo by Rodger Anderson

RIGHT: Senator Tim Johnson is interviewed by local media during a visit to the South Dakota National Guard Headquarters. Senator Johnson was briefed on two specific South Dakota Army National Guard programs; STARBASE and Counterdrug, which the SDARNG supports throughout the state.
Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Don Matthews

By 1st Lt. Anthony Deiss
129th MPAD

FORT MEADE – The South Dakota National Guard Counterdrug Program hosted a Warrant Execution Training Program for South Dakota’s special law enforcement teams from Oct. 3-8 at the Fort Meade Regional Training Institute in Sturgis.

The intent for this advanced training program is to bring together South Dakota National Guard Counterdrug team members, Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams and other local, county, and state law enforcement agencies across the state of South Dakota. By combining

law enforcement agencies in this special training, tactics and techniques can be standardized for special law enforcement operations throughout the state.

According to 2nd Lt. Stacy Spizzirri, Counterdrug operations officer, the program provided logistical support for the exercise, provided facilities to conduct the training in, and vehicles and aircraft needed to support the training. This created a simulated tactical training environment to help the agencies hone their skills.

“This was definitely worth while training for all the agencies who participated,” added Spizzirri.

The training was conducted by

the Southern Tactical Supply – Tiger Training Group, of Pass Christian, Miss., and was sponsored by the South Dakota Department of Criminal Investigation and the Iowa National Guard Midwest Counterdrug Training Center, Des Moines, Iowa.

The Counterdrug program was also visited by South Dakota Senator Tim Johnson at Camp Rapid on Jan. 9.

The Senator was briefed of how the program operates and provides support to the state. The Counterdrug program provides professional and cost-effective counterdrug and drug demand reduction support as requested to local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies and community

based organizations.

Last year, the drug demand reduction operations of the program assisted in 2,469 drug related arrests, cash seizures of more than \$650,000 and have helped to remove \$4.1 million worth of drugs off South Dakota streets. The program also educates middle and high school youth about drug awareness in more than 80 schools and various community organizations throughout the state.

“The South Dakota National Guard’s Counterdrug Program helps keep our communities safe and free from drugs,” said Senator Johnson. “While meeting with them, I was able to see their valuable work firsthand.”